

**Madison County Board of Health**  
Meeting Minutes  
August 18, 2020

On Tuesday, August 18, 2020, a meeting of the Madison County Board of Health came to order at 4:38 p.m. via web/phone.

Board Members in attendance were, Douglas B. Young D.V.M, Melinda Tichenor - MVMC Lab Director, Dayna Thergesen – CPNP, Molly Biehl – D.O., Whitney Marsh – RN Ennis Schools and Margaret Bortko – FNP, DNP Clinical Professor MSU. Also in attendance were Melissa Brummell – MCPHD Director, Jennifer Martens - Public Health Clerk, Van Puckett – Sanitarian, Bonnie O'Neill – Chief Administrative Officer, Joe Brummell - Department of Emergency Services, Walker Van Wagoner - MCPHD, Kacey Smart – Sanitarian assistant, Robert Bates – MC Safety, Thad Kaiser – Twin Bridges School Superintendent, Steve Janzen – Twin Bridges Board Chair, Cindy Perdue Dolan – Senator Daines Representative, Hannah Reynolds – Twin Bridges School Board, and Jaime Wood – Twin Bridges School Board. Community members: Bailey Elliott, Bridgett Croy, Cindy Brown, Donna, Abbie Lee, Ke'lah Savage, Chris, Kendra Horn, Nancy Males, Anne Kish, Melanie Hedges, Faye Maddox and various others phone numbers from the public that did not identify themselves.

**Madison County Current COVID-19 situation**

Melissa Brummell read the Madison County Public Health mission statement which reads: To protect and promote the health and safety of county residents through the efforts of dedicated and skilled professionals applying sound preventative principles. She then reviewed slides on Madison County's COVID-19 status. The current overall count for Montana stands at 5,846 with over 775 cases in the past week, active hospitalizations 97, total hospitalizations 339, recovered 1459 and deaths are at 84. Madison County overall count stands at 87 positive cases, 23 out of state, active hospitalizations 0, total hospitalizations 4, active cases 3, recovered 83, deaths 1, cases per 100,000 rate 988. The Public Health department, DES, DPHHS and the Montana National Guard partnered up again on August 12<sup>th</sup> for a community snapshot testing event. We completed 45 tests. We had 44 return negative and 1 was unable to be resulted. The samples were sent to MSU lab. We received the preliminary results less than 48 hours later. We mailed the test results out to the participants today. Our prior testing event occurred on July 10<sup>th</sup> with 376 completed tests. The results read as follows: 3 positives (1 symptomatic & 2 asymptomatic), 371 negative results and 2 unable to be resulted. We initially had issues with 40% of our tests due to the tubes releasing cyanide gases. The lab was unable to run those tubes safely. They were able to locate a lab that could process those tests. The Public Health Department applied for material masks through FEMA. We were not expecting to receive anything but we received 5,000 material masks for distribution. We will start distributing next week to schools, churches, businesses and community members. For the current and up to date information we have the 9:30 am spot at the Tuesday County Commissioners meetings and also a Community COVID-19 update meeting Tuesday nights at 6:00pm via GoToMeetings. There's also information on the Madison County Public Health Department Facebook page, county page and weekly press releases as needed. If you would like to review the Board of Health agenda or minutes please see the Madison County website under agenda & minutes. We also have weekly updates almost every Tuesday for The

Madisonian newspaper. Staff, board members, community etc are exhausted. We are on day 166 into Madison County establishing the Incident Management Team. We are thankful for the Public Health staff and the Board of Health members. Tired does not even begin to explain the range of emotions, exhaustion or frustration. No amount of training can prepare anyone to manage this type of stress especially for this long of a period. We have no current end in sight but I want to let them know they are the heroes, the helpers and the hope. There are very difficult decisions being made with no playbook and no answers. We thank the community members for their offers of assistance and for joining us with their comments and suggestions at our meetings. Thank you! Question: 1) Regarding testing kits and procedures have they improved so there are less bottlenecks going forward? Answer: We are testing slowly. We have priorities for symptomatic, hospitalized, healthcare workers, close contacts and then general surveillance. We have lots of changes with the state labs and MSU. It seems we are having quick turnarounds so we are hopeful the kinks are worked out. 2) Will there be enough test kits available once school opens? Answer: We have not had any issues with availability that we are aware of for those that are close contacts or symptomatic individuals.

#### **Information release on positive cases discussion**

This has been brought over to numerous agendas due to the public wanting us to specify which side the active cases are from such as Ruby Valley, Madison Valley and Big Sky. Originally Madison County Deputy Attorney Justin Ekwall was going to speak on this topic but unfortunately he had a family emergency last night and is unable to attend. Melissa spoke with Justin and he wanted her to relay some information. He feels as though releasing any information on where a person is located in Madison County is legally risky due to a potential lawsuit if they are identified. The State of Montana already releases age and gender. Melissa also spoke with State DPHHS and they are in the same boat. They feel they release enough information due to legality issues. Justin also wanted Melissa to relay to the Board of Health members if they wish to pursue it further then the safest way would be to start by hiring a statistician that can look at actual statistics and see if it is feasible to release the information in a safe manner. Madison County Health Officer Dr. Molly Biehl also feels there is no way without legal risk to release any further information. No public comment was brought to the meeting. The Board has chosen to end the discussion.

#### **Reassess Phase 2 Governor Bullock's guidelines and mask mandate for a change in recommendations**

The Public Health Department just wishes to remind everyone about Governor Bullock's mask mandate and that he has specifics for schools as they were left out of the initial mask mandate. The basic standard that needs to be met is to abide by the Governor's mandate and the Board of Health also has the right to make stricter guidelines if they choose. Currently we are mandated to wear masks per the Governor if we have 4 or more active cases in our county. The Public Health Department has received numerous calls with confusion due to the teetering back and forth when we are close to that magic number. Doug wants to reiterate that private business owners can have their own requirements regarding their business regardless of the numbers but at minimum they must abide by the Governor's directives. A community parent is nervous with the teetering numbers because she doesn't believe in masks and that causes her children to attend school one day and not the next. Doug informed her that the superintendents are working with the Governor's orders on mask mandates. Question: 1) If the school follows the CDC guidelines then are we in compliance? Answer: We must follow Governor Bullocks mandate over CDC guidelines. 2) Has Public Health offered guidance to schools regarding time frame of mask wearing? Do

they get breaks? Answer: Van spoke with all superintendents. They are aware of the needs and there will be breaks such as eating, drinking and physical activity outside. Margaret shared that there are studies showing reduced flu transmission as well so this could be beneficial in more ways than one. 3) Any flu recommendations this year yet? Answer: It is strongly recommended to get the flu vaccine especially during this pandemic. We have more information coming from a webinar this week. The Public Health Department is working on a plan for restart administering vaccinations for the community. Dr. Doug would like to see information regarding the flu vaccine in the upcoming press releases. 4) Will the schools have an update earlier than the map update at 10am? Answer: Melissa stated that the state is in charge of updating that map daily at 10am. Once those updates are revealed and it is 4 active or above the mandate is immediately in effect. It is up to the schools on how they will proceed with the notifications. The state map is located at: <https://montana.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=7c34f3412536439491adcc2103421d4b> Melinda thinks it would be more proactive to request schools to wear masks during the first week to get used to it and be a little more cautious. Margaret agrees it is a great time for education and mask etiquette.

### **Reassess Events over 50**

The Public Health Department encourages the Board to look at events. We were asking that we limit large group gatherings to decrease the disease burden in our counties in hopes of keeping our schools open at least for the first month or few until we get back in the swing of things. We recommend eliminating the review of events over 200 for the time being. Smaller events over 50 will be reviewed as previously voted on. Dr. Molly Biehl agrees with the recommendation. It helps decrease the spread and potential of school closures and also helps alleviate work load on the healthcare workers especially since we are getting closer to winter. We average about 10-15 event submissions a week for the 50-200 attendee range. None of these plans include school events. We will address that in a later topic. The Public Health Department was just notified last week that we are requested to review school sporting events. We have come up with a draft plan and awaiting MHSA guidelines. We do not want to have to review each game. We will try to create a plan with school athletic directors and superintendents to follow. When we get a case in school, which will happen, the contact tracing cases will increase the workload on an already overloaded staff at the Public Health Department. We would like to focus on that rather than large events. Motion was made by Molly that we no longer accept over 50 attendee applications effective Wednesday August 19, 2020 as they are no longer appropriate and increase our risk of spread in our county particularly because we have increased cases throughout the state and we will have increased people congregating together during school. This excludes school and sporting events and any plans that have already been submitted and approved. Margaret seconded the motion. All voted motion passed 4-2.

### **Enforcement related to Board of Health Orders or Governor Bullocks Directive**

Margaret asked how things have been going for the county and if there have been any challenges. Van Puckett said there have been quite a few challenges but the trend is on the decline. The Board had nothing further to address on this topic at this time. At this time the Board does not believe we need to continue carrying this topic over to the next meeting.

### **Twin Bridges School – Thad Kaiser**

Steven Janzen spoke on Thad's behalf and after review of their topics they decided everything had been addressed in other topics on the agenda and they look forward



to hearing back on sporting events.

### **MHSA Guidelines for Sporting Events**

We will move this topic to the next agenda so we can attend the MHSA meeting tomorrow.

### **Board of Health Opening**

Melissa informed the Board of Health and community of the opening on the Board. By the Board of Health bylaws we are looking for a community member in District 2 which is the Twin Bridges, Pony, Harrison area. If you are interested we would love to hear from you. You can reach out to the Commissioner's office and fill out an application. This is an appointed position by the Commissioners.

### **Additional Agenda Items**

Cindy Perdue Dolan with Senator Daines office wanted to give the Board an update on the topic of telemedicine for our schools from the last meeting. She spoke with Rachel Green which is Senator Daines health advisor. Congress has been trying to pass CARES package number 4. Unfortunately they left Washington DC without making much progress. However, Montana received 1.25 billion dollars and of that hundreds of millions of dollars are still in Helena. They suggest we get together with the school boards, superintendents, Public Health Department and the Board of Health to find out what the needs and wants are and the costs then work with the State of Montana to access those available funds. Margaret spoke about the possibility of using nursing students for help as well. The only issue we foresee is the supervision part since they are not licensed. Melissa Brummell is happy to assist getting a meeting together with the schools to get more assistance on the healthcare side. Melinda, Margaret and Dayna offered to assist. Joe with DES wanted to thank the Board of Health and Public Health for their cohesiveness during such a trying time. It's not easy to make unpopular decisions but we appreciate what you are doing for the community.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Melinda Tichenor made the motion to approve the July 30, 2020 meeting minutes as written. Dayna Therghesen seconded the motion. All voted aye and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Next meeting date:**

The next COVID-19 meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 01, 2020 at 5:30 pm.

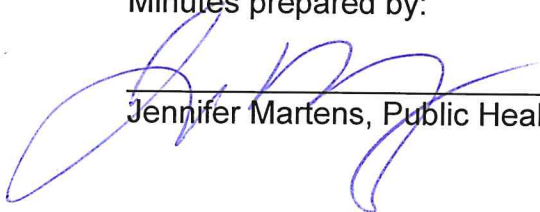
**Meeting Adjourned:**

A motion to adjourn was made by Molly Biehl at 6:39 pm, Melinda Tichenor second the motion, all voted Aye, and the motion was passed unanimously.

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Douglas B. Young, Chairman  
Madison County Board of Health

Date Approved: September 01, 2020  
Minutes prepared by:



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Jennifer Martens, Public Health Clerk